**The world is changing – as are the expectations for what individuals need to be able to know and do to be successful in college, careers and life. Our education system must change to meet these challenges.**

* To be competitive in the 21st century, American students must have the knowledge and skills to succeed in college and in the knowledge-based economy and be prepared to compete with students from the highest performing countries around the world. Today’s students will be competing with their peers from Japan, Korea, Finland and Singapore, not just peers from other states.
* U.S. math scores rank well below those of other high performing countries on international math tests. If the U.S. is going to maintain its edge in innovation, research and development, we need our students to be top math performers.

**Today, too few high school students graduate and, among those who do, too few graduate well-prepared for life after high school.**

* Approximately 30% of students do not graduate high school in four years, a rate that grows to nearly 50% for minority and low-income students.[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Approximately 20% of students entering four-year colleges, and at least 40% of students entering two-year community colleges, must take remedial courses in English and/or math in order to learn, or relearn, high school level skills before they can even begin taking credit-bearing college courses—all the while paying college tuition.[[2]](#footnote-2)
* We can’t prepare students well unless we set the right expectations and goals. States must have college- and career-ready, internationally-benchmarked standards in mathematics and English.

**The best way to prepare students for college and careers is to ensure they graduate with a strong foundation in the core academic areas that will leave all doors open in the future.**

* ALL students must have access to an education that will prepare them for the real-world challenges they will face after high school. In a competitive world economy where some education after high school is increasingly the norm, to prepare students for anything less is to, by definition, deny opportunity.
* Access to a college-and career-ready education should not be determined by the zip code in which a student lives.
* College- and career-ready academic standards, while alone are no silver bullet, provide the necessary foundation upon which curriculum, assessments and instruction are formed. Standards – developed and validated by K-12, higher education and industry leaders – are a critical first step in improving America’s education system.

1. Education Week (2011). Graduation in the United States. http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/dc/2010/34sos\_gradrate.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. National Center for Education Statistics (2003). Remedial Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions in Fall 2000. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)